

THE MINUTES OF THE WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING OCTOBER 1, 2003

Handout(s) given out tonight:

1. *Minuteman Regional Notice to Finance Committee/Warrant Committee re: allocations*
2. *Handouts from Capital Project Planning Mega Meeting 9/29/03*
3. *Draft synopsis of STM (11/17/03) issues from Mel Kleckner to BOS dated 10/1/03*
4. *List of preliminary subcommittee assignments*

Members absent: W. Flewelling, S. Stratford

Also present: School Committee Member Miller, Town Administrator Kleckner, Town Accountant Barbara Hagg, Selectman Mahoney, Town Treasurer Susan Freiner, and School Director of Finance and Administration Dr. Gerry Missal

Chairman Widmer called the meeting to order at 7:31 PM.

Acceptance of Minutes

The Committee discussed the minutes of the September 17, 2003 meeting.

- *Member Brusch suggested two changes to the minutes that were accepted. Member Heigham made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes of September 17, 2003.*

Review of Special Town Meeting Articles

Town Administrator Kleckner presented a draft synopsis of the Special Town Meeting Articles for the agenda of November 17, 2003. The Selectmen will be discussing those articles at their meeting on October 14, 2003 and are having a special meeting on November 5, 2003, with the Warrant Committee to discuss the possibility of a special tax agreement for the O'Neill property.

Member Heigham expects opposition from Cambridge and the neighborhood because of the density and open space issues. The Planning Board will be meeting on 10/21 (after the Selectmen meet) and will then tell the Selectmen if the Planning Board is ready. They will not truncate the process even if O'Neill pushes for speed. O'Neill is dropping the idea of having an alternative commercial building. Heigham added that the Planning Board also has some housekeeping articles to add to the agenda. This is a work in process.

Kleckner continued onto the agenda. The next item for the STM to vote on is the Early Retirement Incentive. The Board of Selectmen must make a decision by 11/1/03.

There are two articles regarding town owned parcels of land that are carry forward from the ATM: Waverley & Affordable Housing (change use and transfer to private entity). Other articles include:

- Change in Town Counsel By-Law to remove residency.
- Increase in Sealer of Weights & Measures fees.
- Safe Haven for Newborns & Infants (all communities with hospitals are being asked to vote this).
- Funding the McLean budget for Community Development and Inspectional Services for the costs involved. The possible source of funds would be free cash.

Member Brusch felt that some of these items can wait until ATM to keep the focus on the most important items and to set the tone.

Review of Mega Meeting - Capital Planning

Selectman Brownsberger discussed the tone and content of the Mega Meeting that had been held two nights previously. Handouts from that meeting were given. The consensus appeared to be to keep the fire stations alone on the ballot for debt exclusion. Various plans were presented to smooth out the debt and projects over 15 years. Chair Widmer felt the concept is helpful and helps the Town get its arms around all the issues (roads & their maintenance is not included in the projects). It was mentioned it should go to citizens at a STM and then continuing to look at the concept of a single financial plan alongside operations, roads, and other capital needs. Member McCormick brought up the difficult economic environment. Chair Widmer agreed, saying that the high tax rate and recession are major financial and planning issues. Member Hofmann thinks the chances of the fire station authorization passing are about even.

Selectman Brownsberger stated what he got out of the meeting: “put first things first.” The fire stations are a priority. The other way would be to put it all together and not have choices. He further stated that he feels the voters need to be educated about the big picture.

Warrant Committee Process

Member White presented the white paper (distributed previously) on the Warrant Committee process for discussion. The purpose of this is to get to a common approach. This is broken down into two parts: the first is prior to the budget process review of the department, goals, and direction; the second part is the budget review where the members would focus on the large budget items, staffing and changes. The writing of the sub committee reports should have a common thread. The WC is not evaluating a department’s performance. Chair Widmer added that the first part would be in the October to December time frame, the budget part in the mid January to Saturday meeting time where the sub committee would already know issues and then have earlier reports and rough outlines.

Member Kobus is not happy with pre-budget review since the WC already has been meeting over a number of years. Chair Widmer explained this is a mission statement for new members. He is asking people to use their judgment and have their arms around the

department earlier in the process. Member Callanan brought up several recommended changes by the WC that had been affected: police staffing, youth commission, sealer of weights & measures. School Committee Member Miller asked about benchmarks for service levels. Member White and School Committee Member Miller had a brisk discussion about how staffing and benchmarks on the town side would work (crimes vs. staffing in the police department). School Committee Member Miller asked whether the WC wasn't indirectly evaluating the performance if looking at staffing and performance. Member White stated that it is not the WC job to say how good a job Superintendent Holland is doing. Class size etc. is not tied to Superintendent Holland's performance. Ratio, population etc. are not performance related, only where the department is deploying resources. Efficiency is an evaluative criteria. Again, Chair Widmer stressed the fact that the WC is only setting up parameters.

Subcommittee Assignments

Chair Widmer explained that the subcommittee assignments for FY03-04 are aimed at keeping members where they have been and to give school people a second assignment. The public works department is in a critical first year so that group has been built up. Chair Widmer will call Henry Hall about a new appointment to replace Member Pat Morley.

Other

Member Hofmann questioned the settlement of labor contracts. Town Administrator Kleckner stated that the fire contract has been approved. They settled for 1% in the form of a stipend not reflected in the base. This is a one year deal. The Town also has a tentative agreement with the dispatchers that are affiliated with the fire union. The Town is close with the police unions. AFSCME and NAGE are stalled, and may be at impasse.

The Committee discussed grievances regarding health insurance. This is a work in process.

Member Brusch attended a meeting with the Recreation Director Bill McKenney, the Chair of the Recreation Commission Lee Barber, Town Administrator Kleckner, and Town Accountant Hagg regarding the Recreation year to date progress on their budget. They appear to be on track.

Member Curtis asked who would be the Selectmen's designated appointee for school labor negotiations. Selectmen Brownsberger stated that Selectman Mahoney would continue in this capacity. School Committee Member Miller stated that "real" negotiations would not begin until January.

Member Heigham made a motion, and it voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Town Accountant

Barbara E. Hagg